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Marc Montminy, Chief

Testimony of Chief Marc Montminy
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April 5th 2013

Raised Bill No. 6682

Senator Coleman, Representative Fox and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Chief Marc Montminy of the Manchester Police Department. I have come today with Superintendent of Schools Dr. Richard Kisiel to discuss with you the importance of Bill 6682, An Act Concerning Collaboration Between Boards of Education and Law Enforcement Personnel.

This bill has 2 important sections relating to interaction with law enforcement. The first is a requirement that school systems adopt policy or enter into a memorandum of understanding with law enforcement that provides ground rules for the interaction between students, staff, and officers. Additionally, the bill calls for the use of a graduated response model for discipline.

Manchester instituted just such a memorandum of understanding after the 2010/2011 school year when school based arrests at the High School alone reached 137. Clearly over the course of years, the role of the school resource officer had changed from mentor, advocate, and trusted adult, to school disciplinarian. What followed was a written agreement with the school system that outlined the core principles that both agencies agree to. School discipline and student misconduct are best addressed by school staff through progressive classroom intervention. Police should only be involved in incidents of misbehavior when the severity of the incident is such that students or staff is at risk of physical harm. Police intervention should be accomplished in the least disruptive manner to the school population. The school system will develop diversionary systems necessary for a graduated response model, and all parties agree to participate in an ongoing collaborative team to address issues moving forward.

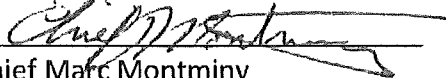


The school year that followed saw a dramatic reduction in school based arrests. The High School went from 137 arrests to 30, a 78% reduction, while expulsions decreased by 69%. I truly believe that this was the result of a coordinated effort on the part of all the stake holders.

This brings me to the 2nd law enforcement concern in this bill. During the course of working together, I came to realize the need to maintain accurate records on school based arrests and intervention attempts. In order to provide the best service to the student, information must be shared amongst disciplines. Consider that the bill calls for the reporting of arrest information disaggregated by factors such as special educational needs. This is information that no one agencies has. For example, the police keep records of arrest that the school system does not have access to, and police have no information on which students have special educational needs. At this time, I am not aware of any statutory authority that allows us to share this information. Juvenile arrest records and school disciplinary records are highly confidential and only releasable under certain circumstances. Care should be taken to make sure this bill authorizes agencies to share the data that the legislature requires in Section 1 (c).

In closing, my experience has been that the partnership amongst the school system, law enforcement, and community agencies is the most powerful agent of change I have ever witnessed. It has brought about a completely different atmosphere in Manchester. I am confident that other communities with school resource officers can benefit from a similar partnership, and I support this legislation.

Thank you for your time and attention. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.


Chief Marc Montminy
Manchester Police department